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SUCCESS STORY

Women Tailors Design Their Careers in Farah

Farah Women's Garment Production Center offers employment opportunities and job skills



Photo: Elaine Ellah/USAID

Nazo, one of the top tailors at the garment production center, loves designing women's clothing and can reproduce designs pictured in magazines.

"I came to the Garment Center because I appreciate the opportunity to work outside of my home," said Nazo, one of 50 seamstresses working out of the USAID center. "I like making women's clothes – any size, any type."

In western Afghanistan's Farah Province, women have few opportunities to go to school or work outside of the home. Even when they possess a useful, income-earning skill like tailoring, many women stay at home during the day for cultural or security reasons.

To provide a safe place for aspiring women tailors to gain new skills and earn an income, USAID opened the Farah Women's Garment Production Center. Dozens of women applied for positions, and the local Community Development Council accepted 50 of the most promising seamstresses. These women had been working from their homes using pedal-style sewing machines and were ready to enrich their skills.

The center's new machinery, such as buttonholers and embroidery machines, enable the women to produce high-quality clothes more efficiently. USAID provided a month of training on machine operation and garment mass production techniques. The women at first found it difficult to use the new generator-powered sewing machines, but eventually embraced the technology.

Nazo, one of the center's best tailors, started sewing when she was 15 years old and is pleased to use her skills to earn a living.

"I came to the Garment Center because I appreciate the opportunity to work outside of my home," Nazo said. "I like making women's clothes – any size, any type."

Show her a photo and she can craft the dress or suit pictured. Each day, Nazo can produce up to three shalwar kameez, the two-piece outfits that Farah women prefer for casual or dress wear.

Shalwar kameez sets designed and sewn at the center are selling briskly for about \$5 each. Most of the marketing so far has been by word of mouth. Nazo happily said, "I don't really have any problem selling the clothing I make."

Now that the Farah Women's Garment Production Center is well-established, USAID will help the women tailors further improve product marketing and develop sustainable business plans.